

I think that the elections that really matter in this country are genuinely determined by questions people ask not only about us but about themselves and how they view themselves in the world in the future we're going into.

And I will say this in closing: I believe that the efforts of Martin Frost and Leader Gephardt and all the members of the New York delegation in 1998 will be successful. If we can get the right kind of balanced budget passed in the Congress, if we can continue to stand up for what's right for America, and if we can make sure the American people are asking the right questions in 1998 of our society and of themselves—if that happens, I am not worried about the outcome of the elections, and more importantly, I'm not worried about the future of our country.

Again, let me say I'm profoundly grateful to New York and grateful to Brooklyn and glad to be here, and thank you for helping the DCCC.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:24 p.m. at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Martin Frost, chairman, Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Proclamation 6989—National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 15, 1997

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

During National Crime Victims' Rights Week, Americans in communities across the country join together to honor victims and survivors, to remember their pain, and to recognize their many contributions to improving our criminal justice system and helping others affected by crime. It is also an occasion for us to acknowledge our significant progress in securing crucial rights and services for crime victims.

As we reflect on the events of this past year, we think of all our fellow citizens who became victims of crime on our streets, at home, in our neighborhoods, in our schools, in our workplaces, and even in our sacred

places of worship. We remember the images of dozens of mostly African American churches being consumed in flames, and we recall church leaders and their congregations, representing all denominations and races, reaching out to invite healing and rebuilding—not in isolation, but in an extraordinary spirit of community and unity. We also remember the many contributions of crime victims in pioneering crime prevention programs in our schools and working to strengthen our laws and to enlighten all of us about the needs of all crime victims.

Through the dedicated efforts of crime victims and their advocates, criminal justice workers, and responsive legislators, we have made important strides in the struggle against violence. The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 allocated an increase in resources for criminal justice programs, deploying thousands of new police officers on our streets. The Brady Bill has prevented over 225,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers from buying handguns since it was enacted. And the Community Notification Act, known as "Megan's Law," is helping us protect our most vulnerable citizens by informing communities of the presence of convicted pedophiles. With community notification, we are working to prevent cases like that of the Act's namesake, Megan Kanka, a 7 year-old who died at the hands of a repeat sex offender released into an unsuspecting community. With these and other preventive measures, we've managed to reduce the rate of violent crime for 5 straight years and to restore hope of reaching our goal of a peaceful America.

We can also take heart in our efforts to assist victims in need of justice and healing in the aftermath of violent crimes. The Violence Against Women Act, a historic and comprehensive plan targeted at ending crimes against women, has provided much-needed services to countless domestic violence victims and their children. Likewise, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, established last year, has responded to more than 73,000 calls for assistance from around the country. As a result of over \$500 million in deposits to the Federal Crime Victims Fund in fiscal 1996, the States will receive more than three times as much in Federal

funds as they have received in any previous year to support local victim assistance programs. And the Antiterrorism Act has guaranteed restitution to victims of Federal crimes and mass violence; it has already provided substantial assistance to victims of the Oklahoma City bombing.

This year, we can take one more historic step to ensure that victims throughout our country are guaranteed the fundamental rights to be present at proceedings, to be informed of significant developments in their cases and of their rights, and to be heard at sentencing and other appropriate times throughout the criminal justice process. The Congress should pass a Victims' Rights Amendment to the United States Constitution that will, when ratified by the States, ensure that crime victims are at the center of the criminal justice process, not on the outside looking in.

We must stand united in caring for and assisting crime victims throughout our country.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim April 13 through April 19, 1997, as National Crime Victims' Rights Week. I urge all Americans to follow in the example of victim advocates and reaffirm our common purpose to protect and comfort one another in times of hardship—not only during this special week but also throughout the year.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifteenth day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

William J. Clinton

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 16, 1997]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on April 17.

Statement on the Fire in Mina, Saudi Arabia

April 15, 1997

I was deeply saddened to learn today of the tragic loss of life in Saudi Arabia among the pilgrims performing the Hajj. I have sent condolences to King Fahd on behalf of the American people and extend our deepest sympathy to the families of those who were killed or injured in the fire.

Exchange With Reporters During a Meeting With the Family of Jackie Robinson in Queens, New York

April 15, 1997

The President. Mark [Mark Knoller, CBS Radio], did you give out any autographs today over at the school?

Q. Thank you, sir, that was very kind of you.

The President. It's a great school, isn't it? Very impressive.

You all know this is the design for the Jackie Robinson coin. And Mrs. Robinson and her family consulted on it—do you want to just tell them?

Rachel Robinson. Yes. The gold coin represents the total man, and we wanted that because we have been trying to impress people with Jack's life in its totality. And we think that's going to be a very rare piece. We're very excited about it. We love the design, and we love the concept, and we're very happy to have it. The silver coin will represent the baseball period and that, of course, he's had an illustrious career. So of course we're proud of that. But we wanted to commemorate both aspects of him—or total aspects of him. And we will sell out. [Laughter] We are already marketing and——

The President. We're hawking the coin. Anybody in our press corps would like to buy one, we can make one available. [Laughter]

Q. What denomination is it? How much money is it worth? What is the face value of it?

The President. What's the sale price?

Mrs. Robinson. The final price hasn't been determined. It's around \$250 on the gold and about \$35 on the silver. And the